

From The Council of State Governments *Capitol Ideas* magazine, November/December 2012.

Straight TALK

WHAT WAS ONE THING ABOUT SERVING IN THE LEGISLATURE THAT SURPRISED YOU THE MOST?



RITA SMART

Representative, Kentucky

Elected in 2010

Former County Extension Agent

Member of Agriculture and Small Business, Education, Local Government, Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Safety committees

THE VAST NUMBER OF ISSUES

"For me, it was the vast number of different issues. I had served on the city commission and ... we had revenue issues and just three or four others. In state government, you have all these many things. To go along with that, you're just bombarded with all this information. ... In the media, most people will hear about the top issues—the budget, retirement, corrections. You hear firsthand in your committee meetings. But if you're not in a committee, then you've got to read the minutes of committee meetings or ask fellow legislators to get you up to date on issues that are going on."



DON SHOOTER

Senator, Arizona

Elected in 2010

Farmer

Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee; vice chair, Water, Land Use and Rural Development Committee; member of Natural Resources and Transportation, and Water, Land Use and Rural Development committees

THINGS ARE AS THEY SEEM

"The thing that surprised me the most is that things are as they seem. Pretty much the situation is what you would think it would be and people behave as you would think they would behave. ... A lot of it didn't surprise me. There are people who are doing it for the right reason. There are people up here doing it for the wrong reason. ... I thought there would be a lot of Machiavellian stuff and this and that. Mostly, it's just people up here trying to do what they think is right."

From The Council of State Governments *Capitol Ideas* magazine, November/December 2012.**GREG HADDAD**Representative,
Connecticut

Elected in 2010

Former Senate
legislative aideVice chair, House
Commerce Committee;
Member of Appropriations
and Higher Education
committees**CONSTITUENTS RESPECT PLAIN TALK**

"Soon after taking office, what struck me was how realistic and thoughtful my constituents have been about the tough decisions that I had to make as a member of the Connecticut General Assembly. When I had difficult news to share, whether about programmatic cuts or tax increases, my constituents consistently encouraged me to focus on solving the budget problems for the long term. Though politicians may not be seen in the highest regard, I found that people respect elected officials who speak plainly and truthfully about the challenges we face and prefer real pragmatic solutions over feel-good substitutes."

**DAN KELLEY**

Representative, Iowa

Elected in 2010

Realtor and small-business owner

2012 Toll Fellow; BILLD Fellow

Member of the Ethics, Agriculture,
Natural Resources, Environmental
Protection, Education and ranking
member on the Administration and
Regulations Budget Subcommittee**OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ARE AVAILABLE**

"I was pleasantly surprised at how many opportunities there are to develop leadership skills and develop your ability to navigate the legislative process offered by organizations such as CSG. ... There are a lot of opportunities to learn about the campaign process, but ... serving as a legislator is a completely different job than running a campaign. ... Another thing that surprised me (was that) it was possible to build good friendships and relationships with fellow representatives in the other party. We hear about partisan bickering and we hear about how the parties don't know how to work together constantly. I expected my legislative experience to be in line with that thinking."

**JEFF LONGBINE**

Senator, Kansas

Elected in 2010 to fill an unexpired term

Chevrolet dealer

Member of Commerce, Financial
Institutions and Insurance, Federal and
State Affairs committees and the KPER
Select Committee**THE ISSUES ARE COMPLEX**

"The thing that surprised me the most was the complexity of some of the issues that we deal with and the research that has to be done to make sure we don't have unintended consequences to the legislation that passes. Oftentimes, (legislation) seems very straightforward on the surface, but when you dig deeper ... or you start looking at how that legislation is going to interact with other pieces of legislation or what effects it's going to have on different constituencies, that's where the real work is. It takes a lot of research and a lot of discussion and a lot of looking at things at different angles to really understand the complexity of something that may appear to be a very simple issue."